

The world has condemned the recent terrorist attacks on the financial and cultural capital of India, Mumbai. In the kingdom, leaders of both Indian and Bahraini communities were last week united at special condolence meetings organised by the Bahrain-India Society to express their sympathies for those killed and injured in the atrocity. Reporter **Anasuya Kesavan**, who moved to the kingdom after seven years of living and working in Mumbai, reflects on the strength and character of her city and reiterates her belief in its unwavering spirit.



ATTACKS CONDEMNED: Bahraini and Indian community leaders at the condolence meeting in Manama

United we will rise!

MUMBAI is my home. I was not born there nor did I go to college there but it is the place where I grew up as a person. It is the city where I experienced, understood and relished the feelings of what my country, India, is really about.

It is not the cleanest or the prettiest city and can annoy you with its crowds, religious fervour, noises and amount of traffic. But, anyone who has lived there a few years, will say with pride that the city has a way with people.

Mumbai embraces everyone. Diversities and differences collapse and recreate themselves to form a completely new meaning. The richest can be regularly seen enjoying a vada pav (Mumbai's signature snack) from the roadside for 40 fils and the poorest taking delight in his household's Ganapati festival celebrations.

The fastest way to travel across the city is the well known Mumbai local train service and everyone from the fisherwoman to the senior bank executive can be often seen sharing the same compartment.

I came to Mumbai to start a new job in a senior managerial position. I came from Delhi and the way of going about everything was different. Houses were not bigger than a matchbox and although you owned a car you would still go to work on the Mumbai local.

On the face of it people appeared to have little time for social get-togethers but on the other hand it was normal to have invitations to four equally exciting events on the same evening.

My first year in Mumbai was close to hell but within a short



ON THE ALERT: Railway Special Forces personnel keep guard at Mumbai's main train station, Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus. India suspects that two senior leaders of a banned Pakistani militant group master-minded the recent three-day terrorist attacks that killed 195 people in Mumbai, an Indian intelligence official said. Right, rescue workers carry a victim towards an ambulance near the site of an attack in the Colaba area of Mumbai.



space of time this big jigsaw puzzle started to make sense. My closest of friends were from all communities – Parsis, Muslims, Gujaratis, Christians ... you name it. My neighbours were Jews and American-born Indians.

My daughter was being given piano lessons by an Anglo-Indian and she was regularly enrolled at summer theatre classes at Prithvi.

With great enthusiasm I would attend world-renowned conductor Zubin Mehta's shows and also have a great evening listening to musical marvel Pandit Bhimsen Joshi. I still remember that fantastic morning emotionally torn by flute maestro Hariprasad Chaurasia's music at the Gateway of India.

I have rocked to the Rolling Stones at the Brabourne Stadium and Jethro Tull at the Shan-

mukhanada Hall and swayed to British blues queen Dana Gillespie at Rang Bhavan.

Today, I am as much a part of Mumbai as it is a part of me. I was watching news on the *Asianet* channel when the story broke of the terrorist assault on my city. Deeply saddened and shocked I went to sleep at midnight hoping to see some positive news in the morning.

At 4am I was blindly groping for the remote. I could not believe my eyes or ears and the gloom continued as neighbours, parents at school and colleagues greeted each other with disbelief. "Hi. Not a good morning today," was the line for the day.

One of the targeted hotels, the Oberoi Trident, was only a short walk from my office in Mittal Towers. It was where most of our official guests were put up and the

hotel was an official partner for several of our events. In fact, to get to work I would drive past the Oberoi every single day.

The Taj hotel was just another 10-minutes drive away. And, I was as much a regular there as I was at the Oberoi. Both the hotels are favourite destinations for conducting business over a great meal.

It was here that I organised a fabulous press conference for world-renowned physicist, Stephen Hawking.

The last few days have been spent emailing and calling friends. My in-box has been flooded and I have yet to hear from some of my friends. Conversations everywhere have been monopolised by the attack on Mumbai. But I am convinced of the bouncebackability of my lovely city – a footballing term my editor is keen on.

I witnessed a series of blasts which shook the city when the local trains were targeted by terrorists in 2006 and have seen one of our office drivers miraculously escape unhurt from the attack. I vividly remember seeing him drenched in a bloodied shirt. It was unnerving but we were both back at work the next day.

When the floods played havoc in Mumbai I remember walking home 10 kilometres and coming back to work the next day.

I have seen first hand the undying spirit of Mumbai and have always saluted it. Even today, I received emails from friends who have been shattered and unnerved and have returned to their daily lives.

As Mumbaikars, we are shaken but not broken. And, I am sure we will continue to be the shining star of our wonderful nation, India.